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ABSTRACT

Illinois' school-reform act of 1985 authorized the development of an Administrators Academy for training principals to evaluate teachers and for training superintendents to evaluate principals. Renewal of school administrators' certification was contingent upon attendance. Some practitioners, educators, and state association directors began to explore the feasibility of mandating training for all school-board members. This paper presents findings of a study that examined Illinois superintendents' views about requiring mandatory training for members of school boards. A national survey of executive directors of school board associations was conducted in spring 1990. Six states--Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Texas--were found to require training programs for school board members. In fall 1990, a survey of all 967 Illinois superintendents elicited 497 usable returns. In general, superintendents, particularly those in smaller districts, viewed mandatory school-board training as necessary. Superintendents of larger districts did not see training as a viable method for reducing administrator-board conflict. It is recommended that course content focus on instructional leadership, academic goals, high expectations for students and teachers, school climate, and school-effectiveness measures. An overview of the six states' training programs is also provided. Two tables are included. (Contains 19 references.) (LMI)

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MANDATORY SCHOOL BOARD TRAINING: AN IDEA WHOSE TIME HAS COME?

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MANDATORY SCHOOL BOARD TRAINING: AN IDEA WHOSE TIME HAS COME?

Introduction and Review of the Literature

The school reform movement based on the effective school research data represents a struggle for the nation's schools that now spans nearly 20 years. During the two decades, the effective schools movement has moved from the initial stage of trying to identify effective schools to the implementation of district-wide school improvement.

Case study analyses (Brookover and Lezotte, 1979; Brookover, et al., 1982; Edmonds, 1984, and others) established several general assumptions about effective schools. Originally generated as a response to the Colemen, et al., report (1966) and the Jencks, et al. study (1972), these case studies found schools across the country which were effective in teaching all their students. Effective school assumptions which resulted include:

- All children can learn.
- Schools can make a difference.
- Effectiveness is established at the campus level when all staff members accept responsibility for the learning of all children.
- There is a well-defined common core of knowledge or basic skills which all children must master.
- The faculty views their work as something beyond what they do within their own four walls.
- Education is a collective, not an individual enterprise (Glickman, 1985).

From these assumptions, a broad definition of an effective school was developed. An effective school is one in which equally high proportions of students master the basic skills regardless of the group (i.e., race, sex, socioeconomic status) to which they belong.

Further studies produced various listings of the defining characteristics or correlates of effective schools. The most commonly accepted listing of correlates are those adopted by Lezotte and Edmonds (1979) in their studies. They are:

- An effective school has a strong instructional focus.
- An effective school has a system for assessing and monitoring students.
- An effective school maintains a positive school climate.
- An effective school recognizes the relationship between expectations and student academic achievement.
- An effective school has a strong instructional leader.

The effective school in the United States can be described in two words: "organized enthusiasm." The research gives the indication that quality and equity are within reach. To reach this vision is not so much a technical matter; whether schools are developed that truly teach all the children as a matter of political will (Lezotte, 1988).

The effective schools research data cast the principal as a vigorous instructional leader. The principal is one who displays leadership characteristics that contain the elements of defining and communicating the school mission, managing curriculum and instruction, and promoting all aspects of the school climate including high expectations of the staff and students (ISBE, 1985). The urgency for district policymakers to accept, support, and maintain responsibility for establishing a climate of instructional leadership for the district is extremely understated in the research.

According to March and Berman (1984), school effectiveness theory gives little consideration to the role of the board of education and the superintendent in the change process and generally is associated with a "grass roots" school-by-school approach to improvement. Districts are expected to play supportive roles, but the real action is perceived to rest at the school level. This perception is simply out of touch with the realities of how schools are governed. The policies and operation of local districts have a profound influence on school effectiveness and the possibilities for improvement. The school improvement process, according to research, has progressed from a school-to-school approach to one that includes the entire district school improvement process. Even in situations in which some form of school-site management prevails, districts typically exercise enormous influence on school and classroom effectiveness, ranging from determining the composition of the student body to collective bargaining and contract enforcement.

It is clear that district leaders play critical roles in shaping the outcomes of school improvement initiatives. They are in the best position to initiate or obstruct action; they have the opportunity to plan and coordinate; they control critical resources; and, ultimately, they decide whether the effort was a success or failure and if it should be expanded, continued, or tabled.

The current emphasis on the district-wide model serves several valuable functions according to Lezotte (1988). The story of the effective school movement is one of expanding organization and evolving enthusiasm from local district, to state, to national, and even to international levels. It seems clear that the vision is clearly within grasp. Schools will not improve much if the staff is simply asked to work harder. Those critics who would have us believe that the effective school processes are both trivial and mechanistic do not have an appreciation for the strategic assumptions upon which this process rests. The successful implementation of these changes requires commitment, persistence, and, as stated earlier, a great deal of political will (Lezotte, 1988).

In the Purkey study (1985), the following policy recommendations were given for school board members to follow to achieve effective schools:

1. The school is the focus of change; its culture, the ultimate policy target.
2. Staffs should analyze their schools' conditions, ...and concentrate on the most likely changes to produce an

3. Resources, especially time and technical assistance, must be provided that will encourage and nurture the process of collaboration and participation necessary to change both people and structures in schools.
4. An inverted pyramid approach to changing schools should be adopted that maximizes local responsibility for school improvement while recognizing the legal responsibility of the higher government levels.

The operating assumptions are that the district administration can mandate school effectiveness projects (top-down), but once the directive has been issued, successful reform depends on school staffs taking responsibility for program design, implementation, and management (bottom-up). In practice, the policies should be intended to facilitate staff planning, decision making, and collaboration. It is not desirable, nor is it possible, to form a "one best policy" description for effective schools.

The role of the school board is to set the direction of the school district's schools in a manner that blends local desires with those mandates on a state and national level. Weatherley and Lipsky (1978) state that coping behaviors of "street-level bureaucrats" are likely to frustrate the intentions of policies imposed upon them that do not square with the reality of their daily experience. Accordingly, four key tasks should be performed by board members and superintendents.

1. Determine guidelines that facilitate the process of school improvement.
2. Specify goals for the district's school staff, the teachers' union, and parent and community groups.
3. Hold central office administrators and school staffs accountable for designing and implementing a school improvement plan and for meeting district goals.
4. Prescribe a timeline for the school improvement project.

Applying effective schools research to school improvement is best approached as a process, not as an event. Such a process approach is more likely to create a permanent change in the operating culture of the school which will accommodate continuous school improvement. However, we cannot just accept the statement that "effective schools are places where principals, teachers, students, and parents agree on the goals, methods, and content of schooling." This statement on the effective schools research, like many other similar statements, ignores the role and contribution that must be made by local boards of education. Boards of education speak through the policies they adopt to govern the educational enterprise and through the practices they establish for the administration to follow. As was stated by the Illinois State Board of Education in a 1989 request for proposals for school board inservice:

> A collaborative effort of a local board of education and district administrators is essential to the district's provision of effective teaching and learning. As the policy-maker of a school district, the local board of education must accept, support, and maintain responsibility for establishing a climate of instructional leadership for the district. (p. 1)

To this statement we would add that local school boards must also expect that their educational administrators are in fact functioning as instructional leaders.

THE WESTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY STUDY

Purpose of the Study

In Illinois, under the school reform act of 1985, an Administrators Academy was developed to train principals to evaluate teachers and superintendents to evaluate principals. Attendance was required under penalty of forfeiture of certificate for failure to attend. The question logically developed then," If administrators are being made more accountable for their role as an instructional leader, how much training are boards of education receiving in the evaluation of the superintendent?" Further discussions between the writers, with practitioners and the state association directors produced a new concern - Would the board of education members voluntarily secure the training if offered? Or would they simply rely on the superintendents to provide the research when it was politically advantageous to follow the results of the research, and ignore it when it was not? Since the position of the superintendent is highly politicized, it appeared that a course in evaluation of the superintendent should be mandated training for all school board members. Further reading indicated that there was virtually no information available on mandated school board training. Therefore, a study was conducted in spring 1990.

Study Design (Phase 1)

A letter of inquiry as to the type of school board training was sent to the executive director of the school board association for all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Results (Phase 1)

Thirty-six of the directors responded. The results of their responses are found in Table 1.

TABLE 1

Status of School Board Training Programs by State

Mandated Training Required	Voluntary Training Program	No Formal Program
AR, GA-4, OK, TX, TN-4, KY.	SD, KS-3, AK, CO, LA, NH, WY, MT, DE, WA, IA, NB, NY, VA, MN, ME, MO, NC, AL, CA, IL, ND, PA, MD, FL, SC.	NM-2, NV, OR, NJ, D.C., OH.

1=support change, 2=studying, 3=actively oppose, 4=no sanction.

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Upon reviewing the results of this very basic study and discussing it with some of the Illinois Association of School Board staff members, other concerns and questions began to surface. These questions were, "Was there a need for mandatory school board training?", "Would mandatory school board training reduce the number of citizens willing to run for the position of school board member?", and "Would mandatory school board training reduce the amount of administrator/board member conflict situations, since board members would know the law, finance system, role of a board member, and role of the board member?"

Study Design (Phase 2)

In the fall of 1990, a survey was mailed to all 967 superintendents in the state of Illinois which included these three questions as part of a larger survey on school finance. No additional attempts were made to contact non-respondents.

Results (Phase 2)

Five hundred four responses were received, with 497 usable questionnaires. The responses are outlined in Tables 2, 3, and 4.

It was interesting to note that the majority of superintendents in all school districts responded that mandatory school board member training should be implemented. The superintendents in very small districts (<500 students), small to medium sized districts (1,001 -2,000 students), and large districts (>5,000 districts) indicated the greatest desire for mandatory training. The responses to the second question, relating to the possible decrease in the number of citizens willing to run for the board, indicated that while this may be a perceived problem in districts of 3,000 students or less, the superintendents in larger districts felt that it would not reduce the number of candidates. Finally, only in districts of less than 2,000 students did the superintendents feel that the training would reduce the number of administrator/board conflicts.

Recommendations

It seems apparent from the results of these limited studies, that mandatory school board training is perceived to be necessary by administrators in all districts, but particularly in smaller districts. While mandatory training is viewed as necessary by the respondents, it is not viewed in larger districts as a method of reducing administrator/board conflict. One can only speculate that the topics: law, finance, role of the board member, and role of the administrator may not be the areas of conflict in these larger districts. Or, if they are, training alone will not be sufficient to reduce the conflict. Based upon these facts, it is recommended that further research be conducted to determine the course content to be developed which would provide a program that would both decrease the amount of administrator/board conflict and increase the basic knowledge of school board members.

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MANDATORY SCHOOL BOARD TRAINING (Response by Size)

There is a need for mandatory school board member training in Illinois.

	School Enrollment Size												Total	
	< 500 students		501-1,000		1,001-2,000		2,001-3,000		3,001-5,000		> 5,000		All Schools	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Agree	100	68.5	73	54.5	86	69.9	20	47.6	13	43.3	12	63.2	304	61.5
No Opinion	13	8.9	21	15.7	9	7.3	5	11.9	8	26.7	4	21.1	60	12.1
Disagree	33	22.6	40	29.9	28	22.8	17	40.5	9	30.0	3	15.8	130	26.3
TOTAL	146	112.8	134	119.4	123	107.7	42	96.4	30	86.6	19	100.1	494	99.9
Missing---3														

Mandatory school board training would reduce the number of citizens willing to run for the position of school board member.

	School Enrollment Size												Total	
	< 500 students		501-1,000		1,001-2,000		2,001-3,000		3,001-5,000		> 5,000		All Schools	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Agree	84	57.5	86	64.2	68	54.8	28	65.1	11	36.7	7	36.8	284	57.3
No Opinion	15	10.3	15	11.2	17	13.7	4	9.3	6	20.0	3	15.8	60	12.1
Disagree	47	32.2	33	24.6	39	31.5	11	25.6	13	43.3	9	47.4	152	30.6
TOTAL	146	100.0	134	100.0	124	100.0	43	100.0	30	100.0	19	100.0	496	100.0
Missing---1														

Mandatory school board training would reduce the amount of administrator/board member conflict situations, since board members would know the law, finance system, role of a board member, and role of the administrator.

	School Enrollment Size												Total	
	< 500 students		501-1,000		1,001-2,000		2,001-3,000		3,001-5,000		> 5,000		All Schools	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Agree	74	51.0	68	50.7	64	52.0	12	27.9	11	36.7	6	31.6	235	47.6
No Opinion	26	17.9	17	12.7	17	13.8	14	32.6	8	26.7	4	21.1	86	17.4
Disagree	45	31.0	49	36.6	42	34.1	17	39.5	11	36.7	9	47.4	173	35.0
TOTAL	145	99.9	134	100.0	123	99.9	43	100.0	30	100.1	19	100.1	494	100.0
Missing---3														

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Goals

The writers recognize the critical nature of the board's role in providing a program of quality instruction. Boards need to identify and practice effective behaviors and strategies that will enable them to fulfill their fundamental responsibilities. Any inservice training for school board members should provide background information on effective schools to board members and strategies and techniques which other boards of education have successfully utilized to apply the effective schools research to their districts. School board inservice should focus on the following goal:

> The primary goal of school board inservice training should be to increase school board members' awareness and understanding of the correlates of effective schools and their ability to determine whether or not their school demonstrates the characteristics of effective schools. They should gain a knowledge of the role of policy and practice as it pertains to the support of instructional leadership within their districts. The intended outcome should be that the local board of education members will be equipped with knowledge and techniques that will allow them to develop policies and practices within their districts to support the instructional leadership role of their school district administrators.

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP TRAINING FOR SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

Identification of Content

Six states have mandatory school board training at the present time as outlined earlier in the study. The following is a brief outline of the course content for five of those states and the name of a contact person in each state who can provide further information concerning their program.

ARKANSAS
(Law enacted in 1987)

REQUIREMENT

Six hours for newly elected and re-elected board members.

CURRICULUM

Duties of school boards
Laws governing the state's public schools

PROVIDER OF TRAINING

Arkansas School Boards Association
Institutions of higher education
Arkansas Department of Education

FAILURE TO COMPLY

Certifications of completion are entered into minutes of local school board.

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COSTS

Per diem plus other necessary expenses paid from district funds.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Mr. J. K. Williams, Executive Director
Arkansas School Boards Association
815 Bishop Street
Little Rock, AR 72202
(501) 372-1415

GEORGIA
(Law was enacted in 1985)

REQUIREMENT

All newly elected and appointed members of boards of local units shall, before or within one year after assuming office, receive orientation. All members are required to participate in at least one day of training annually to ensure the effective management and operation of local units of administration

CURRICULUM

Education program objectives
School finance
School law with emphasis on the "Quality Basic Education Act"
Responsiveness to the community
Ethics, duties and responsibilities of board members
Evaluation superintendent and local board of education
Other such topics as deemed necessary by the State Board of Education

PROVIDER OF TRAINING

The Department of Education in cooperation with the Georgia School Boards Association

FAILURE TO COMPLY

State Board authorized to **REQUIRE** the training of all board members. If members do not comply within one year, cited in media as a non-standard district for board training and must file a corrective plan. If not complying the second year, can cause the district to lose funding.

FUNDING

$100,000 was appropriated by Legislature for 1185 board members in 186 districts. Though the funding was cut for this year, it has been reinstated for next year.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Mr. Gary Ashley, Executive Vice President
Georgia School Boards Association
1240 Arkinson Road
Lawrenceville, GA 30245
(404) 962-2985

KENTUCKY
(Law enacted in 1984)

REQUIREMENT

12 hours -- board members with 0-3 years experience
8 hours -- board members with 4-7 years experience
4 hours -- board members with 8 or more years experience

CURRICULUM

Includes but is not limited to:

basic roles and responsibilities of the district board and members
instructional programs
district finances
relations with superintendent and staff
school law
community relations

PROVIDER OF TRAINING

Kentucky School Boards Association provides 8 or the 12 hours

Remaining "flexible" hours may be attained by attending national, regional and state meeting; however, those must be certified by the Board.

FAILURE TO COMPLY

The names of all district board members who fail to complete the required hours of inservice training shall be transmitted by the Department of Education to the Attorney General. Unless an extension is granted by the State Department of Education, the failure to complete hours results in the **EXPULSION** of that board member from his or her local board of education.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Dr. David L. Keller, Executive Director
Kentucky School Boards Association
Box 96-A
Frankfort, KY 40601
(502) 695-4630

OKLAHOMA

(Law was enacted in 1986, revised in 1991)

REQUIREMENT

New members must agree and pledge in writing that they will attend a two day statewide workshop soon after election. During the 13 months following election each member must receive 20 hours of training. Veteran members must complete 15 hours of training during each term of office and **MAY NOT** run for office again unless 15 hours are completed.

CURRICULUM

School Finance
Oklahoma School Code and related laws
Ethics
Duties and responsibilities of district board of education members

PROVIDER OF TRAINING

Oklahoma State School Boards Association and State Department of Education co-sponsor the New School Board Member Workshop. OSSBA provides workshops on a continual basis. Both Oklahoma State Schools Boards Association and Oklahoma State Department of Education provide other opportunities.

FAILURE TO COMPLY

If a board member fails to obey the law, the local board of education shall declare his or her seat **VACANT** and fill the vacancy according to law.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Dr. Bob Monneyham, Executive Director
Oklahoma State School Boards Association
4001 North Lincoln, Suite 410
Oklahoma City, OK 73105

TENNESSEE

(Law enacted in 1990)

REQUIREMENT

New board members are required to attend an orientation module plus a regular seven-hour training module. All board members are required to attend one of six seven hour training modules per year.

CURRICULUM

Board-Superintendent Relations
Policy and Board Operations
School Law
Planning
Finance
School Governance
New Board Member Orientation

PROVIDER OF TRAINING

State Board of Education
Tennessee School Boards Association
University of Tennessee Center for Governmental Training
Educational Foundation
State Department of Education

FAILURE TO COMPLY

There is **NO PENALTY** in the current law. A reform bill currently before the Tennessee Legislature would require **REMOVAL** from office of a board member at the end of a year in which they did not receive the mandated training.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Dr. Daniel J. Tollett, Executive Director
Tennessee School Boards Association
323 McLemore Street, Suite A
Nashville, TN 37203
(615) 251-1518

TEXAS
(Law enacted in 1985)

REQUIREMENT

New board members are required to have orientation within 60 days of election, and are required to receive a total of 20 hours of training, during the first year elected or appointed, in the twelve standards. All other board members are required to receive at least six hours of training annually.

CURRICULUM

Ethics
Board Member and superintendent responsibilities
Interaction with community
School board policy
Effective planning
Instructional programs
Business and fiscal practices
School law
Personnel
Board meeting management
Meeting mandate for training

PROVIDER OF TRAINING

Education Service Centers in Texas (required by law to provide programs)
Private and professional organizations (includes TASB)
School districts
Governmental agencies
Colleges and universities
(Sponsors of specific training standards are approved for a three year period)

FAILURE TO COMPLY

At the call for election each year, the names of board members not attaining the required number of hours will be made available to the media and will register as a "concern" for district accreditation.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Dr. Billy D. Walker, Executive Director
Texas Association of School Boards
P.O. box 400
Austin, TX 78767
1-800-580-8272 (580-TASB)

Recommended Method for Training Development

Research on adult learning indicates that adults need to be able to integrate new ideas with what they already know if they are to assimilate and use the new information. Information that conflicts sharply with what is already held to be true forces a re-evaluation of previous learning and is integrated more slowly. Information that has little "conceptual overlap" with what is already known is acquired slowly. Fast paced, complex, or unusual learning tasks interfere with learning the concepts or information they are intended to teach. Chuck Namit, in the March 1989 issue of **American School Board Journal**, details several ways to run effective workshops for school board members. Four of these are: 1) get them involved, 2) forget long lectures, 3) make lessons relevant; and 4) let experience shine.

Adults prefer self-directed and self-designed learning projects seven to one over group learning experiences led by a professional. Furthermore, the adult learner often selects more than one medium for the design. Self direction does not mean isolation. Studies of self-directed learning show that self-directed projects involve an average of 10 other people as resources, guides, encouragers and the like.

Adults have expectations, and it is critical to take time up front to clarify and articulate all expectations before getting into content. Both trainees and the trainer/facilitator need to state their expectations. Bad experiences in traditional education, feelings about authority, and preoccupation with events outside the classroom all affect in-class experiences. However, adults bring a great deal of life experience into the classroom, an invaluable asset to be acknowledged, tapped and used. Adults can learn well and much from dialogue with respected peers (Zemke and Zemke, 1981).

In view of adult learning research, the writers believe that inservice training for school board members should be based on the following:

Use the life experiences of board members to develop new ideas in promoting instructional leadership.

Allow board members to compare their own ideas and practices with those of their peers.

Develop a set of general guidelines for formulating board policies and practices from the case study solutions.

Develop a set of case studies which will enable board members to learn by participating in realistic simulations.

Allow board members to learn from the views of highly respected peers in business and the professions. (Panel discussion)

Provide simulations of real life situations in which school board members perform their roles.

Allow board members to examine the views of nationally respected professionals regarding the importance of administrators who are instructional leaders.

Provide board members with simulated practice in developing policies and practices that support the instructional leadership role of district administrators.

Provide the trainers of the local school board members with instruction in being facilitators of learning rather than instructors who "hold forth."

Provide trainers of school board members with practice in using instructional objectives in the case study method.

Recommended Course Content

Before local school board members can take a proactive role in making sure that their districts do exhibit the characteristics of effective schools, the board members themselves must be very well versed in the characteristics of effective schools. Also, they must know how board members can support the task of establishing a climate that both supports the administrative team as the instructional leaders of the district and requires that their administrators will function in that role. **The five correlates of effective schools on which we believe that school board members should be inserviced are:**

1. **Instructional Leadership.** The instructional leader is one who effectively communicates the mission of the school to the staff, parents, community, and students. All decisions support the school's mission which is based on the correlates of effective schools.

2. **Instructional Focus.** Instructional focus is the attention to academic goals, objectives, and priorities. Effective schools maintain an instructional focus that supports academic achievement for all children.

3. **High Expectations/Teacher Behavior.** Behaviors in the school are characterized by high expectations for all students and teachers. The staff believes and demonstrates that all

students can attain mastery of basic skills. The staff has the capability and responsibility to help all students achieve mastery.

4. **School Climate.** A positive school climate goes beyond safety and orderliness. School climate is an atmosphere where teaching and learning are emphasized and rewarded. A consistent system of norms, attitudes and beliefs form the foundation for the policies and practices in the school.

5. **Measurement.** Measurement is feedback on student academic progress through the use of test instruments and other non-test related data such as attendance and drop out rates. The results of testing and other available data are used to improve individual student performance, curriculum, and instructional practices of the school.

Evaluation

Any successful inservice program must have an evaluation phase. Program evaluation is generally considered to have two major components. During the formative or process phase, the concern is to determine if there are discrepancies between what was proposed and what is being accomplished, and to monitor progress toward the program objectives. In the summative phase or outcome phase, the stress is on determining the program's impact on the participants and whether or not the objectives have been attained. It is extremely important that each of the programs be modified by a panel of school board members and administrators to reflect the needs of both parties to reduce conflict and increase board member/administrator productivity and role satisfaction.

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